

THE SPIRIT OF LEADERSHIP

In every society the people seen as the source of “all” the problems are the leaders. Be it in Greece, Iran, Turkey, or Nigeria, the leaders are the ones to take the first blows of every economic downturn, political turmoil, insecurity, and sometimes even natural disasters. This is not because the people rallying on the streets consider leaders as some super humans with magic wands but because leaders are expected to be ahead of the people in every aspect of life. Indeed, nothing moves in a society without leaders.

But then, what does it take to be a leader? What makes up the spirit of leadership? Does it help answer the age old question of if leaders are born or made? Let us examine three things that the spirit of leadership is.

1. The spirit of leadership is the child of vision

One blind man cannot lead another. That seems like common sense but unfortunately in the sphere of leadership it is not so logical. When you see a man with a stick and his hands placed on another person right in front of him you automatically assume he is blind. What never crosses your mind is that the blind person may be the folk in front or, more comically, both may be blind! You assume this because you know that to lead you need to see.

Unfortunately many leaders cannot see. To be a follower denotes there is a place you want to get to but you need someone else to facilitate your journey. It certainly is – at least physically – permissive for a follower to not see his way. To be a leader, on the other hand, you must see your way through.

Many folks take this for granted because they have misunderstood the basic concept of leadership. It is assumed that leadership is about staying in front or

being on top. Both of these ideas are misguided because a shepherd boy, for example, leads from behind his flock. In effect he is more a guide who knows where he his flock needs to be and how to get them there. Without proper knowledge of where to lead people to you cannot guide.

Many leaders imagine themselves and their followers as a pyramid structure in which they are the peak while their followers carry them. This is another misconception because rather than a pyramid, the structure is turned upside down and the leader is at the bottom carrying the weight of the followers.

With this modification in conceiving what leadership is, you would realize that you cannot lead without seeing where you are headed. The sight of the leader gives solace to the followers. It makes them confidence to put the next foot forward, knowing that if their leader did not fall into a ditch they would not.

It does not matter if it is a question of marriage, or football team. A leaders' vision is paramount. The first question to ask any one person you intend to follow is, "what can you see?"

2. The spirit of leadership is coordinated and sustained by a healthy self esteem

Leadership does not begin with an office. It has been said a million times over that you can lead from the middle of the pack. Inclusively, even the pillars of leadership; vision, integrity, taking initiative, and the like, are not sufficient to put you on the right leadership pedestal. This is so because leadership also does not begin with a mechanical adherence to principles. I am certain that you have seen "leaders" that do all the right things but can at best be referred to as poor leaders. You see, he is not a leader that does not *think* he is a leader. So, in essence, leadership begins with an attitude of the mind.

To develop the mindset of leadership you must first have a healthy self-esteem. Your self-esteem is your estimation of yourself – the worth you place on yourself. In itself it remains neutral but you make it positive or negative. A healthy self-esteem brings with it confidence in your ability, courage to face daunting situations, a listening ear to every person involved in the task and a proactive rather than reactive attitude toward criticisms. An unhealthy self-esteem shows itself in an attitude of despair, worry, fear, and the like. A leader with a healthy self-esteem will emanate all the positives, while the opposite will be the case for a leader with an unhealthy self-esteem.

In addition to the attitude tool-kit of a leader, there must be an openness and boldness to permit creativity and innovation in everyday activities. Many leaders cannot face change, especially when it is initiated by someone other than themselves. You must be able to entertain creative and innovative suggestions. This may mean that you admit your own suggestions are not as innovative as the new ones suggested.

A leader must have a mindset that understands that authority in itself is a burden. This means that you must first be able to submit to authority for you to understand how and why people should submit to your authority. If folks would submit to your authority you must have a mindset that tells you it isn't an opportunity to exploit but a responsibility to serve because a great leader, at the end of the day, is simply a great servant.

3. The spirit of leadership is guided by boundaries

We were usually paired two pupils to a desk in primary school. I remember when we would use whatever we could to carefully measure and mark out the midpoint of the desk and declare it "personal territory". What we were saying to each other was, "You can do whatever you choose to but *only* to this extent." Whoever

initiates the idea of marking out territories also knows that he is defining his own extent.

We know this idea all too well as adults. We know that there are international boundaries, state boundaries, city boundaries, family boundaries, and personal boundaries. Although boundaries seem selfish what they do is show us the extents to which we should exert control. Boundaries are of utmost importance if there would be peaceful coexistence among people of different interests.

Leadership is marked-out all through with boundaries. There is nothing like a “boundless leader.” Any leader who does not identify and acknowledge her boundary would soon lose the respect and honor accrued to her leadership. To enjoy limitless expression of your potential you must do it within your defined boundaries.

How do you identify your boundaries? The first step is to be completely sincere to yourself in your self-estimation. How much can your potential handle? Can your finances invest as much as you want to? Can your education produce the results you desire? Do you have the level of competence needed for the success you desire? If not you would be doing yourself a grave disservice to progress without reviewing boundaries.

Second, understand that you must identify and respect the boundaries of other people involved. It does not matter how dependent people may be on you. When you disrespectfully ignore their personal space they will flinch. Any further respect you receive from them is merely mechanical and no longer willful submission.

Your success journey is highly empowered by recognizing your boundaries.